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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	DS-00	EAP-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00
	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-00	NRRC-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	TRSE-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7979  
INFO EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE PRIORITY  
AMCONSUL SYDNEY PRIORITY  
USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0947  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 007928

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2014  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PNAT](#) [FR](#) [FP](#) [XV](#)  
SUBJECT: TENSION IN TAHITI AS POLITICAL STRUGGLE PLAYS OUT  
IN POLYNESIA, PARIS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Paul Mailhot, for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

1. (SBU) Summary: Political turmoil, confusion, and charges of corruption reign in Papeete and Paris as both Oscar Temaru and Gaston Flosse claim to be the legitimate president of French Polynesia in the aftermath of an October 9 vote of censure and subsequent October 22 vote for president in the Polynesian Assembly. Temaru, ousted in the censure vote, launched a "spiritual fast" on October 26 along with several dozen supporters, all of whom have refused to vacate the presidential palace. Flosse declared himself the legitimate president of French Polynesia based on an October 22 parliamentary vote boycotted by Temaru's party. Over 10,500 miles away in Paris, French President Jacques Chirac, a long-time Flosse ally, has thus far ignored calls from the opposition -- and even some from the center-right -- to dissolve the Polynesian Assembly and hold new elections. The current situation in French Polynesia remains peaceful; however, some in France, mindful of the riots that gripped the archipelago following the 1995 decision by Paris to resume nuclear testing in the islands, eye events in the South Pacific cautiously. End Summary.

2. (U) The roots of the current crisis lie in the May 23 Polynesian Parliamentary elections, which saw Oscar Temaru's coalition win a one-seat majority in the Assembly (29 of the 57 seats), wrenching control away from Gaston Flosse, who had been president of French Polynesia for 16 of the last 19 years. Temaru's coalition includes many who favor independence or at least more autonomy from France and is supported by the Socialist Party (PS) in metropolitan France. Flosse, who is a senator in Chirac's UMP party and a longtime ally of the president, strongly advocates remaining within the French fold. Temaru was ousted as president when members of his coalition defected, allowing an October 9 censure vote to pass and launching a provision that the Assembly elect a new president within 15 days. Further complication arose when parliamentarians for Flosse and Temaru named differing dates for the holding of the presidential vote. Temaru parliamentarians boycotted an October 19 vote, preventing a necessary quorum to elect the new president. A pro-independence boycott of the October 22 vote failed to prevent Flosse's election due to a reduced quorum requirement.

3. (U) On October 23, the Paris-based State Council, France's Supreme Court for state and administrative affairs, ruled against two motions presented by Temaru's supporters to nullify the October 9 censure vote. When Temaru parliamentarians boycotted the Assembly meeting on October 25 -- the date they themselves claimed was the legitimate day for elections -- Flosse declared himself the legitimate president of French Polynesia based on the October 22 vote. Temaru and several dozen of his supporters began a hunger strike on October 26 and have refused to vacate the Presidential Palace. They claim they will continue their protests until Chirac dissolves the Assembly and holds new elections. Flosse has set up an alternate government and claims to have assumed all presidential duties. He has filed a court order to remove Temaru and his supporters from the presidential palace; a decision from the court is expected

October 29.

14. (U) The tension in Papeete is mirrored in Paris, where Socialist Party legislators have lambasted the government and PS leader Francois Hollande has criticized Chirac for his "complicity" in the situation. Chirac has thus far refused to meet with PS leaders to discuss the situation. Several heated debates occurred in the National Assembly between PS legislators clamoring for new elections and the Minister for Overseas Territories, Brigitte Girardin, who has insisted that French Polynesia's institutions are functioning as they should and that new elections are unnecessary. The political opposition are not the only critics of Chirac. The president of the center-right Union for French Democracy (UDF) Francois Beyrou and a deputy from Chirac's own UMP party have called for new elections. Delegations in support of Temaru are expected to arrive in Paris and Brussels October 30 to push for new Polynesian elections in both the national and international arenas.

15. (C) Comment: Criticisms of Flosse have often pointed to his very close relationship with Chirac and the existence of several ongoing investigations into the former's governance, including charges of misappropriating state funds stemming

from an October 2003 investigation into dozens of individuals paid state wages without performing any work. Temaru's backers also claim that an audit into Flosse's prior administration was nearing its conclusion when the censure vote occurred. Chirac helped rework a law in 1997 that gave the Polynesian president control over state money for discretionary spending, which Flosse allegedly used to his political benefit. From 1997 - 2004, Flosse directed additional benefits of nearly 75 euros per person to his own municipality, while Temaru's received nothing. Members of the UDF have noted that Flosse's party actively cased members of Temaru's coalition, seeking someone who could be convinced to switch allegiance and thus allow for the toppling of Temaru's government. It is not clear if Chirac or members of his government had anything to do with ousting Temaru; however, it is likely that Chirac is happier with his longtime associate Flosse in power. Temaru's independence coalition was a cause of concern for Paris, which strongly wishes to avoid French Polynesia being placed on the UN decolonization list, as happened with the French territory of New Caledonia in 1995.

16. (C) Comment continued: Of most concern is the current state of stability in French Polynesia. It bodes well that an October 16 protest against the censure vote, attended by between 15,000 and 20,000 of the island chain's 240,000 inhabitants, proceeded peacefully. Both Temaru and Flosse have called for the population to remain calm. However, tensions in the archipelago are increasing. In the October 25 Assembly meeting, partisans of both Flosse and Temaru were preemptively separated to avoid conflict. Additionally, the French press has alluded to the 1995 riots that erupted after the French government resumed nuclear tests in the islands, resulting in the destruction of hundreds of cars, the torching of several buildings, and the recall of the Chilean and New Zealand ambassadors from Paris. Most recently, New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff called the growing tension worrisome. While a tense calm currently exists in French Polynesia, the complex nature of the political crises, the extent to which the GOF may intervene directly, and the possibility of trouble merit close following. End Comment. Leach

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